ABS consults further on topics for the 2026 Census

Media Release

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Source: 2026 Census topic review: Phase one directions

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is today publishing a shortlist of topics being considered for the 2026 Census and launching the next phase of public consultation.

Georgia Chapman, Director 2026 Census Content said, “earlier this year, the ABS invited the Australian community to tell us what they think should be included in the next Census.

“We received 260 submissions and considered more than 500 other pieces of feedback as part of this consultation.

“The Australian Census currently has 53 topics. This would more than double to accommodate the requests we received during the first phase of consultation.

“The ABS has evaluated the value to the public of collecting each of these new topics and all of the existing topics, to develop our shortlist of topics for further consideration in the 2026 Census.”

The ABS is now seeking public feedback to understand the impacts of the proposed changes to the topics.

“There are more requests for new topics than can be accommodated in the Census, so new topics need to be prioritised and existing topics need to be considered for removal.

“This is the time to let us know if there will be impacts for you or your organisation if we changed or removed one of the shortlisted topics.

“Following this consultation, the ABS will assess the shortlisted topics further based on the feasibility of collecting the data in the Census. This assessment will inform the decision on which topics proceed to testing.

“New topics in the Census are carefully considered to balance the cost to the Australian taxpayer and the burden on households when answering additional questions.”

The second phase of consultation is open until 8 September 2023.

In 2024, the ABS will make a recommendation to the Government on the topics for the next Census. The final decision on 2026 Census topics will be made by the Government.

The ABS thanks everyone who provided feedback during phase one of the consultation, and for Australia’s ongoing support of the Census.

For more information view 2026 Census topic review: phase one directions (/statistics/research/2026-census-topic-review-phase-one-directions) .

Table 1: New topics being considered further for inclusion

Theme	Topic
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity
Cultural diversity	Ethnic identity
Disability and carers	Additional measure of disability
Household and families	Shared care of children
Housing	Dwelling occupancy status
Location	Main reason for moving in last 12 months
Population	Gender
	Sexual orientation
	Variations of sex characteristics
Transport	Journey to education (Mode of travel to education institution and Name and address of education institution)
Other topics	Household energy use
	Impact of natural disasters

Table 2: Existing topics being considered for change

Theme	Topic	Proposed change
Cultural diversity	Ancestry	Assess feasibility of increasing the number of ancestries collected
	Country of birth of parents	Investigate feasibility of redesigning the question to be more inclusive and meet data needs
	Main language other than English used at home	Assess feasibility of removing "at home" or collecting all languages used
	Proficiency in spoken English	Assess feasibility of asking the question of more people
	Religious affiliation	Review question design and response categories
Education and training	Attendance at an educational institution	Assess feasibility of new response categories
Health	Long-term health conditions	Assess feasibility of new response categories
Household and families	Household and family relationships	Assess feasibility of improving data on diverse family structures
	Marital status	Review response categories
	Persons temporarily absent on Census night	Assess feasibility of asking additional questions
Income and work	Hours worked	Assess change from actual hours worked to usual hours worked
	Income	Assess feasibility of replacing with administrative data
	Labour force status	Assess feasibility of collecting data on joblessness
	Status in employment	Assess feasibility of collecting data on employment arrangements
Population	Sex	Review question design to collect sex recorded at birth and response categories
Transport	Mode of travel to work	Review question design and response categories

Table 3: Existing topics being considered for removal

Theme	Topic	Reason
Income and work	Number of employees (employed by owner managers)	Availability of alternative data sources
Population	Number of children ever born	Move to decennial collection
Transport	Number of motor vehicles	Availability of alternative data sources
Unpaid work and care	Unpaid work - domestic activities	Availability of alternative data sources

Media notes

- For media requests and interviews, contact the ABS Media Team on media@abs.gov.au (mailto:media@abs.gov.au) or 1300 175 070.
- Submissions to the 2026 Census topic consultation process can be made through the ABS consultation hub (https://consult.abs.gov.au/) .
- Further information on 2026 Census topic consultation is available on the ABS website (/census/2026-census-topic-review) and on the Census Media Hub (/census/census-media-hub/resources/2026-census-topic-consultation-resources) .
- For updates about the process, subscribe at www.subscribe.abs.gov.au/2026Census (http://www.subscribe.abs.gov.au/2026Census) .